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ABSTRACT

An analysis that seems adequate for simple constructions in a language may prove inadequate when more complex constructions are considered. A previous analysis of antipassive in Eskimo, attempting to refute two basic assumptions of relational grammar, becomes burdensome when its implications for a comprehensive analysis of all clause types are examined. Relational grammar gives a much simpler account of case marking and verb agreement in Eskimo, as illustrated in examples from passive, indirect object advancement, Benefactive-2 Advancement, and Comitative-2 Advancement constructions. Other research provides examples from causative clause union, relative clauses, participial groups, and reflexives. Relational grammar provides not only solid language-internal analysis, it also shows how Eskimo is similar to or different from other languages. (MSE)

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GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS IN ESKIMO: A response to Kalmár

Richard Nivens

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1 Introduction[1]

Kalmár (1979) attempts to disprove what he sees as two basic assumptions behind the relational grammar analysis of Eskimo antipassives.[2] His arguments, however, have at least two flaws: a misunderstanding of relational grammar, and a less-than-comprehensive view of the Eskimo data.

2 Antipassive and the RG analysis

Traditional discussions of Eskimo grammar say that there are two kinds of transitive clause, one called "ergative", the other "antipassive". Seiler and Frantz (to appear) provide the following examples of ergative and antipassive clauses in Iñupiat Eskimo:[3]

(1) a. Mari-m taapkua kamŋ-ich tuni-gai (Saityak-mun)
-ERG those boot-PL sold-3s/3p -F3
'Mary sold those boots (to Saityuk)'

b. Mari-Ø kamiŋ-ñik tunisi-ruq (Saityak-mun)
-ABS -2Cho sell(AP)-3s -F3
'Mary sold boots (to Saityuk)'

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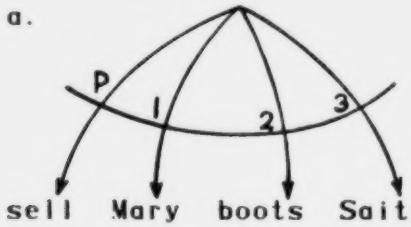
The stratal diagrams below indicate the grammatical relations of these two clauses:

(2) a.



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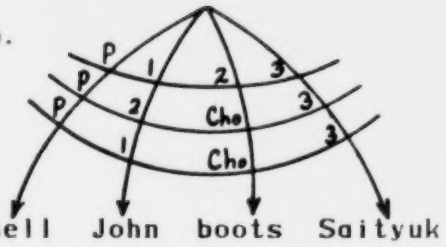


The controversial tri-stratal analysis of the antipassive construction was first proposed by Postal (1977). This structure is brought about by interaction between 1-2 Retreat (from a transitive stratum) and the Final 1 Law. The Final 1 Law says that every basic clause must have a 1-arc in the final stratum. Given the three term relations 1, 2, and 3, there are three types of retreat possible: 1-2, 2-3, and 1-3. If the 1 retreats to a 2, placing the initial 2 **en chomage**, the Final 1 Law dictates that something must bear the grammatical relation "1" in the final stratum.

As will be seen, the RG account of antipassive fits in well with a comprehensive generalization of case marking in Iñupiat Eskimo.

3 On Kalmár's arguments against the relational grammar analysis

Kalmár's claim is that RG assumes "that the antipassive clause is generated by a rule whose input is its near-paraphrase, the so-called ergative clause" (p.117). (Later - on page 128 - he makes this just a bit more palatable by saying that the input is the **grammatical relations** of the ergative clause.) He says that RG calls the ergative construction "basic". But in RG, the only thing that is in any way "basic" is the initial stratum of grammatical relations. The ergative construction is not "basic", but it is simpler, having fewer strata than the antipassive -- in fact, only one: the initial stratum is the final stratum. Kalmár is trying to force RG to make claims it doesn't make, by artificially classifying it as a theory that "systematically selects one agnate as 'basic'" (p.128).

Kalmár's lack of understanding of RG naturally causes him to misunderstand the RG analysis of antipassive in Eskimo. For RG does not isolate certain constructions from the others in a language, as Kalmár has done. Nor does it

isolate one language from all other natural languages. Rather, the main goal of relational grammar as a theory is to explain how languages are alike and how they differ.

Kalmár (p.136) cites evidence from Czech to prove that the Eskimo antipassive construction is more similar to the common European transitive clause than the ergative is. He concludes (a) that if either construction in Eskimo is more "basic", it's the antipassive, since the transitive clause is clearly "basic" to European languages: (b) that "subject case-marking and verb agreement are not in themselves sufficient to identify a clause as intransitive". As a result, he claims, the RG arguments against the 2-hood of the noun marked by -mik/-ñik are invalid. His logic is that since in Czech the transitive subject is marked the same way as the intransitive subject, and since the verb in both transitive and intransitive clauses agrees only with the subject, then the transitive clause in Czech is more similar to the Eskimo antipassive than to the ergative. However, his argument has a few fundamental flaws. For one thing, no one has ever claimed that Czech had ergative case marking: it is pointless to compare Czech case marking with that of Eskimo. Secondly, the Czech verb never agrees with the direct object, while Eskimo verbs always agree with the (final) direct object, if there is one. His whole argument falls apart. In effect, he accuses RG proponents of doing something they have always argued against: proposing universals based on surface structure.

The RG analysis claims that the antipassive construction is registered by the verbal suffix -si.[4] Kalmár doesn't give an argument against this, but he does say in a footnote that -si probably "functions to prevent a reflexive interpretation that may attach to semantically transitive verbs without an overt object." But -si does occur in clauses with an overt direct object, as was seen in (1b). In such clauses there is no chance of ambiguity. In addition, he offers no explanation for suffixes -kau ('PSV'), -qatigi ('C2A'), -uti ('B2A'), and -chi ('32A'), which occur in the same position class as -si (see section 3).

Kalmár claims that the intermediate stratum in the antipassive construction "is irrelevant here, although it is important to relational theory for reasons that have little to do with the antipassive clause" (p.130). But the intermediate stratum has much to do with the antipassive clause, as Davies (1984) shows. Davies provides evidence that in Choctaw the verb agrees with the (initial and final) subject of an antipassive clause as if it were a direct

object at some level. In fact, he provides evidence for the grammatical relations of all three strata in the Choctaw antipassive construction. The theoretical significance of Davies' paper is that the intermediate stratum is relevant, even in languages where it's not explicit that the initial and final subject is an intermediate direct object. Since RG is a theory of universal grammar, evidence from one language can be used to support analyses for all other languages. The tri-stratal RG analysis of antipassive is not a "gimmick", as some have charged: it is a logical result of interaction between various laws of universal grammar which have already proven themselves in countless constructions of numerous languages.

4 Other constructions in Iñupiat

The generalizations that the RG analysis provides are supported by other constructions found in Eskimo, which Kalmár makes no mention of. In this section I will mention only four such constructions, and in section 4 the two analyses will be examined in the light of these constructions.

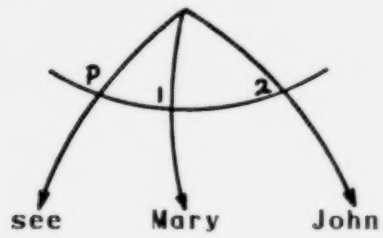
4.1 Passive

The informal RG definition of Passive is "2-1 advancement from a transitive stratum." This construction does occur in Iñupiat, and is registered by the verbal suffix **-kau**.

(3) a. Mari-**m** John-**Ø** qiñiġ-aa
-ERG John-ABS see-3s/3p
'Mary sees John'

b. John-**Ø** qiñi-kau-ruq Mari-miñ
-ABS -PSV-3s -1Cho
(same)

(4) a.



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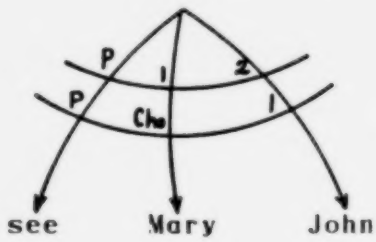


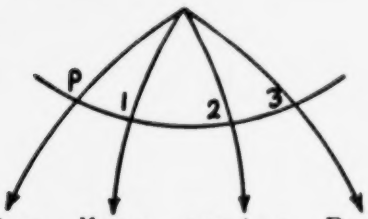
4.2 Indirect object advancement

Many languages allow an initial indirect object to advance to direct objecthood, thus placing the initial direct object (if any) en chomage. In Iñupiat this advancement is registered by the verbal affix -chi. Consider the following pair of sentences:

(5) a. Mari-m mani-ich qait-kai Panaliŋ-mun
-ERG money-PL give-3s/3p -F3
'Mary gave the money to Pangalik'

b. Mari-m Panalik-Ø qait-chi-gaa maniŋ-ñik
-ERG -ABS -32A-3s/3s money-2Cho
(same)

(6) a.



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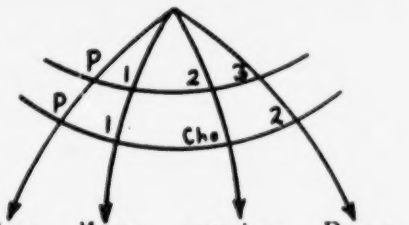
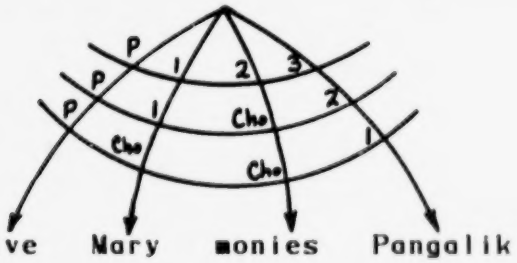


Consider also the following sentence and its corresponding stratal diagram:

(7) Panalik-Ø qait-chi-kau-ruq maniŋ-ñik Mari-miñ
-ABS -32A-PSV-3s money-2Cho -1Cho
'Mary gave the monies to Pangalik'

(8)



Since the initial 3 has advanced to 2, it is eligible to advance to 1 via Passive. The initial 2, on the other hand, cannot advance:

(9) a.* mani-ich Panalik-Ø qait-chi-kau-rut Mari-miñ
-3p

b.* mani-ich Panalik-Ø qait-chi-kau-gaat Mari-miñ
-3p/3s

The fact that the initial 2 cannot advance (via Passive) can be taken as evidence that the initial 3 has placed it en chomage.

4.3 Benefactive-2 advancement

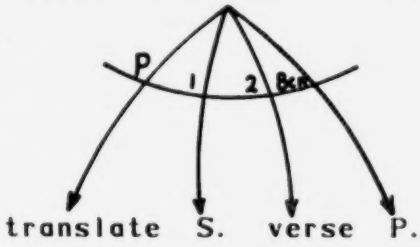
Various obliques can also advance to termhood: one such possibility is Benefactive-2 advancement. Consider the sentences in (10), and note the presence of suffix -uti:

(10) a. Siqupsira-m taiyuaq-0 mumik-kaa Pangaliŋ-mun
-ERG verse-ABS translate-3s/3s -BEN
'Siqupsiraq translates a verse for Pangalik'

b. Siqupsira-m Pangalik-0 mumi-uti-gaa taiyua-mik
-ERG -ABS -B2A-3s/3s -2Cho
(same)

Seiler (1978:74) proposes the following relational networks:

(11) a.



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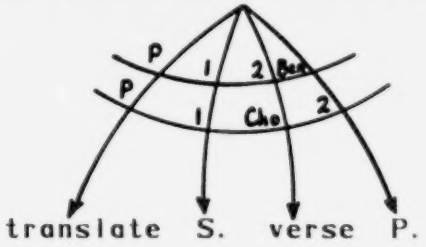

4.4 Comitative-2 advancement

Another oblique that can advance to direct object is the comitative. In fact, Comitative-2 advancement is obligatory in Iñupiat, whether the initial stratum is intransitive as in (12) or transitive as in (13):

(12) a. Putu-0 aullaq-tuq
-ABS leave-3s
'Putu went away.'

b. Putu-m Matulik-0 aullaq-qatigi-gaa
-ERG -ABS leave-C2A-3s/3s
'Putu went away together with Matulik.'

(13) a. Mari-m kuvraq-0 amu-gaa
-ERG net-ABS pull:out-3s/3s
'Mary pulls out the net.'

b. Mari-m John-Ø amu-qatigi-gaa kuvra-mik
-ERG -ABS pull:out-C2A-3s/3s net-2Cho
'Mary together with John pulls out the net.'

This obligatory advancement is registered on the verb with the suffix -qatigi.

5 On Kalmár's analysis of Eskimo

"Ergative and antipassive have the same grammati relations" (p.117). This statement of Kalmár's is both (for the initial stratum) and false (for the structure as a whole). A comprehensive view of facts concerning verb agreement and case-marking generalizations will bear this out.

5.1 Case marking

There is a problem with Kalmár's notions of "subject" and "direct object". He defines "subject" syntactically, relying on Keenan's list of subject properties -- a list shown by Dixon (1979:110-12) to be weak or even invalid for so-called "ergative languages" like Eskimo. But even if we grant the validity of Kalmár's argument concerning subjects, he still has to prove that the noun marked with -mik is a direct object. Identifying one nominal as a subject does not make the other a direct object. Indeed, Kalmár himself is hesitant to call the mik noun a direct object (p. 120), saying he will deal with that question later. Yet throughout the article he does refer to it as a direct object; I find no argument to the contrary. Actually, he seems to be basing his notion of "direct object" on semantic criteria. He seems to define "direct object" as the patient in a clause, or (more likely) as what Dixon (1979) calls the "O" nominal. In other words, he uses the term "direct object" for initial direct objects, while he defines "subject" on the basis of surface structure criteria.

Relational grammar provides a straightforward accounting of case-marking in Iñupiat:

(14) Final grammatical relations are marked as follows:
-m marks singular final ergative nominals
-Ø marks singular final absolutive nominals
-ich marks plural final (nuclear?) terms
-mik (PL -ñik) marks final 2-chomeurs and instruments[5]
-miñ (PL -niñ) marks final 1-chomeurs and sources
-mun (PL -nun) marks final 3s, benefactives, and goals

Kalmár, on the other hand, sees the ergative/antipassive distinction as "basic", and his description of case marking is split along this line:

(15) a. In ergative clauses:
-up marks subjects
-Ø marks direct objects

b. In antipassive clauses:
-Ø marks subjects
-mik/-ñik marks direct objects

c. In intransitive clauses:
-Ø marks subjects

To handle the other constructions I cited in section 3, Kalmár's description of case marking would be very complex:

(16)	Subj.	D.O.	I.O.	BEN	COM
ergative (1a,3a,5a,11a)	-m	-Ø	-mun	-mun	--
passivized ergative (4b)	-miñ	-Ø	-mun	-mun	--
32A clause (5b)	-m	-mik	-Ø	-mun	--
passivized 32A (7)	-miñ	-mik	-Ø	-mun	--
B2A clause (10b)	-m	-mik	-mun	-Ø	--
antipassive (1b)	-Ø	-mik	-mun	-mun	--
intransitive	-Ø	--	--	-mun	--
intransitive with COM (12b)	-m	--	--	-mun	-Ø
transitive with COM (13b)	-m	-mik	-mun	-mun	-Ø

5.2 Verb agreement

With regard to verb agreement, Kalmár again misses the generalization that RG provides by insisting on a basic dichotomy of ergative and antipassive clauses. The generalization for verb agreement is really quite simple:

(17) The verb agrees in person and number with final nuclear terms.

But Kalmár's description of verb agreement would contain no generalization. In simple antipassive clauses there is no final direct object and therefore no person agreement with direct object.

(18) clause type:	verb agrees with:
ergative	- subject and direct object
passivized ergative	- direct object
32A clause	- subject and indirect object
passivized 32A	- indirect object
B2A clause	- subject and benefactive
antipassive	- subject
intransitive	- subject
intransitive with COM	- subject and comitative
transitive with COM	- subject and comitative

5.3 Distribution of ergative and antipassive clauses in discourse

Kalmár proposes that the antipassive structure is used when the direct object is "new", while the ergative structure is used for "given" direct objects. He claims that -mik causes a new referent to be entered into the hearer's "registry", and that it is also a morphological trigger which causes the syntax of the sentence to change. The former claim I can accept, but the latter doesn't do justice to the data. If the presence of -mik is sufficient to mark a new referent, why should any change in syntax occur at all? If the antipassive subject is still the subject of a transitive clause, as Kalmár claims, why should it be marked with the Ø case, which happens to be the case marking for intransitive subjects? Case marking in Eskimo is clearly on an ergative/absolutive basis. Why is the verbal suffix -si found only in antipassive constructions? Why should the verb cease to agree with the direct object, just because it's "new"? Why should the syntax change when there is no overt morphological trigger, i.e. when the direct object is unspecified? And why only direct objects? If -mik indicates that a referent is to be entered into the hearer's "registry", why aren't new subjects marked with -mik? Kalmár's "explanation" raises more questions than it answers.

In fact, it just doesn't work. He identifies the "new" direct object with the -mik case. But he only discusses the -mik case in antipassive clauses. Recall that the -mik case also occurs in clauses with 3-2 advancement (5b, 7), in clauses with Benefactive-2 advancement (10b), and in clauses with Comitative-2 advancement (13b). While -mik may well mark "new" direct objects in antipassive clauses, it seems unlikely that it would mark "new" direct objects in clauses involving the promotion of another nominal. Thus "new" direct objects might better be identified with the antipassive clause, rather than with the -mik case.

Kalmár (p.124) states that antipassive clauses are more common in elicited material than are ergative, while the reverse is true of discourse. He explains that since elicited sentences are generally devoid of a discourse context, it makes sense that the information encoded in them should tend to be "new". According to the relational grammar analysis, the ergative construction is syntactically simpler than the antipassive. Since "given" information is what holds a discourse together, we might expect the simpler (shall we say "unmarked"?) construction to be used for this "basic" discourse function, and thus be more common in narrative texts, as is the case. The more complex construction should be used for special purposes, such as entering a new referent into the hearer's "registry". But for some reason Kalmár doesn't see it this way. He doesn't see the introduction of new information as any more specialized a function than the maintenance of given information. Rather, he sees these two discourse functions as "symmetrical", "diametrically opposed", "equivalent" (p.133). It is for this reason - because of his view of discourse functions - that he insists that the ergative construction is syntactically no simpler than the antipassive.

Relational grammar, like TG, is a theory of "autonomous syntax". It does not claim that other factors (semantic, pragmatic, thematic, etc.) are irrelevant: however, it claims that syntax itself can be adequately described without reference to these factors. Perlmutter (1980:203-4) states that

> a particular construction may be linked in individual languages with semantic, pragmatic, or presuppositional effects, with constraints on definiteness or specificity or reference of nominals, with the organization of the sentence into old and new information, and so on. The general strategy of RG in all such cases is to separate the syntactic nature of a particular construction from the semantic, pragmatic, etc., factors with which it interacts. ... A particular syntactic construction can be the same in two languages that use it in very different semantic or pragmatic contexts.

6 Conclusion

An analysis which seems adequate for simple constructions in a language may prove to be inadequate when more complex constructions are considered. Kalmár's

analysis of antipassive in Eskimo becomes burdensome when you look at its implications for a comprehensive analysis of all clause types. Relational grammar gives a much simpler account of case marking and verb agreement in Eskimo. The examples given here should prove the point; Seiler (1978) and Seiler and Frantz (to appear) also provide evidence from causative clause union, relative clauses, participial groups, and reflexives. And not only does RG provide a solid language-internal analysis, it also shows how Eskimo is similar to other languages, and how it is different.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Chuck Speck, Cindy Williams, Steve Marlett, Dave Weber, Don Frantz, and John Little for comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Of course, I take responsibility for any errors or inadequacies. For a brief introduction to relational grammar, see Perlmutter (1980).

2. "The first is that the antipassive clause is generated by a rule whose input is its near-paraphrase, the so-called ergative clause. The second assumption is that the antipassive clause has no superficial direct object, and is therefore a "surface" intransitive clause" (p.117).

3. Data not taken from Kalmár's paper are from Seiler (1978) or Seiler and Frantz (to appear). (Kalmár's -up and -it correspond to the Iñupiat -ŋ and -ich.) Abbreviations used here are: ABS = absolutive; AP = antipassive; BEN = benefactive; B2A = BEN-2 advancement; Cho = chomeur; COM = comitative; C2A = COM-2 advancement; ERG = ergative; F3 = final indirect object; PL = plural; PSV = passive; 1 = subject; 2 = direct object; 3 = indirect object; 32A = 3-2 advancement. In verb glosses only: p = plural; s = singular; 3 = 3rd person; 3s/3p = 3s final 1, 3p final 2.

4. The suffix -si has several allomorphs. Woodbury (1977:323) reports that in Greenlandic Eskimo, -si has allomorphs -i, -si, -ši, -ŋŋig, -llir, or -Ø, depending on the verb stem.

5. RG currently makes no attempt to explain why various grammatical relations share the same case marking. This is not to say, however, that no cross-linguistic generalizations can be found.

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